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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 077308

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 528- MARCH 24, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. MORE UNIFIL TROOPS ARRIVED YESTERDAY, BUT THE FLOW REMAINED VERY SMALL. FRENCH TROOPS IN BEIRUT AND SWEDISH PERSONNEL ON THE ISRAEL-LEBANESE BORDER AS OF LATE YESTERDAY HAVE NOT YET MOVED TO THE SOUTH. THE CEASEFIRE CONTINUED TO HOLD WITH ONLY MINOR VIOLATIONS, BUT KATUSHYA ROCKETS FIRED FROM TYRE AND NABATIYA LANDED IN NORTHERN ISRAEL EARLY YESTERDAY.

2. THE ISRAELIS MAY BE PREPARING TO WITHDRAW SOME FORCES FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON AS UN TROOPS TAKE UP POSITIONS IN THE SOUTH AND THE PROSPECTS FOR RENEWED FIGHTING DECREASE. WE DO NOT YET KNOW HOW EXTENSIVE THE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL WILL BE, BUT SUPPORT ELEMENTS ELSEWHERE MAY HAVE RECEIVED SIMILAR ORDERS TO RETURN TO ISRAEL. IF NECESSARY, THE ISRAELIS COULD MOVE THEIR FORCES QUICKLY BACK INTO LEBANON. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

3. PALESTINIANS. THE PLO'S STANDING ON THE WEST BANK HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED AS A RESULT OF THE RESISTANCE IT PUT UP TO THE ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ARAB STATES, PARTICULARLY THE "STEAD-CONFIDENTIAL

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FAST" ONES, ARE BEING CASTIGATED FOR THEIR LACK OF CON-
CRETE SUPPORT FOR THE PLO DURING THE INVASION, ACCORDING TO OUR JERUSALEM CONSULATE GENERAL. THE CONSULATE COMMENTED THAT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHANCES HAVE BECOME MORE REMOTE THAT WEST BANK MODERATES WOULD AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

4. ISRAEL. DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN, IN A MAARIV INTERVIEW PUBLISHED TODAY, CALLED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "PEACE COALITION" GOVERNMENT. THIS INTERVIEW, WHICH WAS APPARENTLY GIVEN WITHOUT BEGIN'S KNOWLEDGE, CONSTITUTES A MAJOR POLITICAL CHALLENGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER. WEIZMAN'S GROWING DISCONTENT WITH WHAT HE REGARDS AS AN EXCESSIVELY HARD LINE BY BEGIN AND HIS STEADILY RISING APPREHENSION THAT THE CHANCE FOR PEACE WITH EGYPT MAY BE LOST BECAUSE OF BEGIN'S RIGIDITY, ARE COMING TO A HEAD IN THE WAKE OF WHAT IS WIDELY PERCEIVED IN ISRAEL AS BEGIN'S UNSUCCESSFUL VISIT TO THE US.

5. WEIZMAN'S APPEAL TO THE LABOR ALIGNMENT TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS DESIGNED TO PUT PRESSURE ON BEGIN EITHER TO MODIFY HIS ADAMANT STANCE ON SETTLEMENTS AND OTHER

ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO ISRAEL'S IMAGE IN THE US AND TO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS OR TO AGREE TO BROADEN THE COALITION AS A MEANS OF STRENGTHENING PRAGMATIC ELEMENTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS ALSO INTENDED TO DEMONSTRATE ISRAEL'S DETERMINATION TO RESIST EXTERNAL PRESSURE FOR UNACCEPTABLE CONCESSIONS. WEIZMAN'S BOLD MOVE LEAVES UNANSWERED THE QUESTIONS OF HOW FAR THE DEFENSE MINISTER IS LIKELY TO GO IF BEGIN REFUSED TO BROADEN THE COALITION OR ADOPT A SOFTER NEGOTIATING LINE AND WHETHER WEIZMAN HAS ALTERED HIS OWN LONG-STANDING OPPOSITION TO TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN THE WEST BANK.

6. WEIZMAN IS A NOVICE WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICAL IN-
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FIGHTING. HE WAS BADLY MAULED WHEN HE CHALLENGED BEGIN'S AUTHORITY IN THE PAST. NEVERTHELESS, WEIZMAN MAY HAVE CALCULATED THAT HIS OWN POSITION HAS BEEN SUFFICIENTLY STRENGTHENED, AND BEGIN'S SUFFICIENTLY WEAKENED, TO ENABLE WEIZMAN TO BRING ABOUT POLICY CHANGES. (HIS RECENT SUCCESS IN COMPELLING BEGIN TO HALT WORK ON THE RAFAH SETTLEMENTS MAY HAVE MISLED HIM ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR WINNING THE POLICY BATTLE WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY AVOIDING A BREAK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER.)

7. BEGIN WILL REGARD WEIZMAN'S CHALLENGE AS A PUBLIC ATTACK ON HIS PERFORMANCE AS PRIME MINISTER AND WILL GREATLY RESENT AN ATTEMPT TO FORCE HIS HAND IN THE WAKE OF HIS US VISIT. WEIZMAN'S QUASI-PUBLIC ULTIMATUM OVER SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY, HIS WARM TREATMENT BY SADAT, THE PERCEPTION WITHIN ISRAEL THAT WEIZMAN IS THE EGYPTIAN-AMERICAN CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER, AND THE MAARIV INTERVIEW MAY COMBINE TO LEAD BEGIN TO MOVE DECISIVELY AGAINST WEIZMAN. ON THE OTHER HAND, BEGIN MAY BE HELD BACK BY THE VIEW IN ISRAEL THAT HIS TRIP WAS A FAILURE, WEIZMAN'S POPULARITY, AND THE NEED TO MAINTAIN A UNIFIED FRONT AGAINST WASHINGTON.

8. IN ANY TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN BEGIN AND WEIZMAN IN HERUT, THE LATTER WOULD FARE POORLY BECAUSE OF HIS "DOVISH STANCE. ALTHOUGH WEIZMAN HAS WIDE BACKING FOR HIS STAND IN THE LIBERAL PARTY, IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER THE LIBERALS ARE PREPARED TO JEOPARDIZE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH HERUT. THE HARDLINE LA'AM COMPONENT OF THE LIKUD LOOKS TO DAYAN--NOT WEIZMAN--FOR INSPIRATION.

9. THE BEHAVIOR OF THE LABOR PARTY IN COMING WEEKS WILL TURN UPON A COMBINATION OF STATE AND PARTY INTERESTS.
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LABOR WOULD BECOME RECEPTIVE TO CALLS FOR A "PEACE COALITION" IF A CONFRONTATION WITH THE US SEEMED TO BE DEVELOPING. ON THE OTHER HAND, FEW IN LABOR WOULD WANT TO SHARE THE BLAME FOR A DETERIORATION IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE MANY LABORITES BELIEVE THAT BEGIN'S IDEOLOGICAL RIGIDITY IS RESPONSIBLE.

10. ALTHOUGH SHIMON PERES IS WIDELY SUSPECTED OF HARBORING A LONGING FOR JOINING THE COALITION TO SATISFY HIS DESIRE FOR MINISTERIAL STATUS, THE LABOR PARTY WOULD BE PLEASED TO STAND ASIDE AND WATCH THE LIKUD GOVERNMENT DESTROY ITS OWN PRESTIGE AND CREDIBILITY. IN THIS CONTEXT, LABOR MAY SEE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RETURNING TO POWER WITHIN THE PRESENT KNESSET IF THE LIKUD FRAGMENTS AND THE DMC EXISTS FROM THE COALITION. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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